

YOUR LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES

PROVIDING BENEFITS - SERVICES



TO ALL VETERANS - WIDOWS AND DEPENDENTS

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IN TIME OF NEED THEY SERVED THEIR COUNTRY

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ASSISTING VETERANS WITH BENEFITS AND SERVICES,
ASSISTING THEIR DEPENDENTS AND WIDOWS,
THAT'S THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES

Massachusetts Veterans' Service Agents Association, Inc.

Your Department of Veterans' Services has been providing services and benefits to veterans and to the dependents of veterans since 1861.

From the date of that commitment by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that insured that no individual who served his or her state and nation with honor during periods of war or other conflicts, would ever be "pauperized" or forced to turn to public welfare for assistance. The Massachusetts Executive Office and the Massachusetts House and Senate have shown their continued concern for the welfare of the veteran and his or her dependents with the fullest support of one of the most comprehensive programs for veterans in the country, the Department of Veterans' Services and the local Department of Veterans' Services.

From that start in 1861, to that date in 1888, when the Soldiers' Relief Law was enacted, which gave cities and towns the right to support honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, widows, and minor children, to that date in 1945, when the Office of Commissioner of Veterans' Services was created and to that date in 1946 when Chapter 115 (Veterans' Services) of the Massachusetts General Laws was reorganized to form the basis of today's benefits and services program, the veterans within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have not been forgotten.

With Chapter 599 Acts of 1946, mandating "municipal and district Departments of Veterans' Services", Veterans' Agents and Directors of Veterans' Services have become the first individuals that an ill, disabled, indigent, unemployed, or injured veteran has turned to for assistance.

We of the Massachusetts Veterans' Service Agents Association are committed today to assist our needy veterans and their dependents, with the same concern and compassion that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office and the Massachusetts House and Senate had when aid and assistance for our veterans was first created in the Commonwealth. From an early start many reforms and changes have been made to improve the delivery of services. Today, with the continued support of the Massachusetts Executive Office and the Massachusetts House and Senate, the Veterans' Agents and Directors of Veterans' Services throughout the Commonwealth are meeting the needs of our former service personnel.



Department of Veterans Affairs

Regional Office

Norris Cotton Federal Building
275 Chestnut Street
Manchester, NH 03101

Regional Office

John F. Kennedy Federal Building
Government Center
Boston, Mass.

Regional Office

380 Westminster Mall
Providence,
Rhode Island

The availability of trained and dedicated Veterans' Agents and Directors of Veterans' Services within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who are prepared to meet the needs of veterans and their dependents through their knowledge of benefits provided not only by the Commonwealth, but also by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), provides assurance that Massachusetts veterans and their dependents will be well served during times of need and distress.

Massachusetts is home to more than 605,800 veterans, 203,000 of whom are over the age of 65. Many of these veterans and their dependents have eligibility for entitlements from Veterans Affairs. The valuable service work performed by the Veterans' Agents and the Directors of Veterans' Services on behalf of these veterans and their dependents has resulted in a better quality of life to those who have served their country in times of need as well as for their dependents.

We acknowledge with deep appreciation the valuable service performed by the Veterans' Agents and the Directors of Veterans' Services and know that when veterans or their dependents call upon Veterans' Services for assistance in obtaining Federal Veterans Affairs entitlements, prompt and qualitative services and assistance will be rendered.

Handwritten signature of Michael D. Olson in black ink.

Michael D. Olson, Director
Veterans Affairs Regional Office
Boston, MA

Handwritten signature of Edward J. Hubbard in black ink.

Edward Hubbard, Director
Veterans Affairs Regional Office
Manchester, NH

Handwritten signature of John Montgomery in black ink.

John Montgomery, Director
Veterans Affairs Regional Office
Providence, RI

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES

Why Service Work For Veterans?

The question is sometimes asked, "why is it necessary for an agency such as the Department of Veterans' Services to do service work, filing of claims for entitlements from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, for veterans?" The laws under which the Veterans Affairs operates, restricts it from developing, presenting, and prosecuting claims against itself. It is likewise restricted from procuring such needed evidence as statements from doctors, affidavits, birth records, and the like, and will proceed to adjudicate claims in the absence of such evidence. It is therefore incumbent upon the veteran himself to furnish all necessary evidence, and in most instances he needs the services of a Veterans' Service Officer to whom he can turn for assistance, advice, and counsel. Veterans' benefits are not automatic in any sense of the word. Veterans' benefits must be applied for in accordance with Federal or State Laws, rules, and regulations. Veterans Affairs estimates that the current number of veterans in the United States is just over 26.4 million and of this number 605,800 are residing in Massachusetts. The World War II veterans, numbering 201,300, remain the largest single group of veterans in Massachusetts, though the number of Vietnam Era veterans, 166,400 in Massachusetts, will surpass the World War II veterans by the year 2000. It is noted that the number of Massachusetts veterans age 65 and older will increase significantly during the next 10 years and, nationally, the number at age 75 and older will triple by the end of the century. Projections indicate that as the veterans population becomes older, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of older veterans seeking assistance from Veterans Affairs as well as the dependents and survivors of the veterans. The current veterans population, plus veterans dependents and survivors, represents 78.2 million people, which is one third of America's population who will all be potentially eligible for Veterans Affairs services or benefits. The Veterans' Agents and Directors of Veterans Services' must be

prepared to meet this call and need by our Massachusetts veterans, dependents, and survivors for Veterans Affairs entitlements by the knowledgeable performance of service work. Presently the Veterans' Agents and Directors perform more service work than all other agencies combined and this performance will continue in the future as veterans, their dependents and survivors turn to the Department of Veterans' Services for assistance in securing Veterans Affairs entitlements.

What are Service Work Dollar Returns?

When Federal entitlements are secured from the Veterans Affairs such entitlements reduce, in many instances, the dollars that are paid, or could be paid to veterans and their dependents, or their survivors, as financial aid by the Department of Veterans' Services. Veterans Affairs expenditure by county for FY94 is a true indication that veterans, their dependents and survivors are receiving VA entitlements and with many of these entitlements a result of service work performed by Veterans' Agents or Directors of Veterans' Services.

COUNTY	
Barnstable	\$24,745,289
Berkshire	11,026,509
Bristol	40,927,280
Dukes	828,130
Essex	55,712,420
Franklin	6,541,023
Hampden	36,840,309
Hampshire	12,118,405
Middlesex	108,478,299
Nantucket	280,265
Norfolk	55,439,647
Plymouth	41,962,095
Suffolk	56,486,490
Worcester	61,575,990
Massachusetts Total	\$512,962,151

The assistance rendered by Veterans' Agents and Directors of Veterans' Services is a fiscally

responsible management application as it not only assists the applicant, but the receipt of the entitlements is cost savings to Veterans' Services and indicates the respect for an accountability to the taxpayers of the Commonwealth by the Veterans' Agents and Directors. A Veterans' Agent or Director of Veterans' Services should be available full time to assist the veteran, the dependent and survivor so that timely service work might be performed.

Who Is In Charge Of The Office?

The person in charge of each local and district Department of Veterans' Services is known as the Agent or Director. Appointed locally by the Mayor in cities, by the Board of Selectmen or Town Council in towns, and by District Boards in districts. Required by law, Agents-Directors must be veterans.

Agent's-Director's Responsibilities

The partial listing of "Services and Benefits" within this booklet illustrates the technical nature of this highly specialized field known as Veterans' Services. The list also indicates that the Agents and Directors must have a whole-hearted interest and devotion to the work as well as the ability to cope with the requirements of the job.

He or she must acquire a general working knowledge of the many federal and state agencies serving the veteran, including many within the private sector. The Agents or Directors, as well as members of their staffs, must keep informed of the changes that take place as a result of changes of laws pertaining to veterans rights, these changes enacted by Congress or by the State Legislature, to protect the interests of the veteran and his or her dependents.

The Agent or Director must attend frequent training seminars and conferences held under the direction of the State Commissioner of Veteran's Services for the benefit of the local and district Veterans' Agents or Directors. The Agent or Director must maintain a cooperative liaison

with all human services agencies as well as with employers within the Agent's or Director's area. The Agent or Director may also be called upon to attend meetings of allied groups.

One Stop Center

The Veterans' Service Department is a ONE STOP center for veterans and the dependents of veterans and in addition to the duties to aid, assist, and advise, as stated in Chapter 115, Mass. General Law, the Agents and Directors counsel, file claims, explore every avenue of resources and revenue available. The veteran or dependent of the veteran must be motivated to realize and be aware of their own assets. Where rehabilitation may be required, proper attention is given to that need with all being done in a manner that treats the veteran or his dependent with dignity and courtesy. Our services to veterans and to their dependents is a record of which we are proud. The expertise of our Agents and Directors and their well trained staffs, plus the advantage of HOME RULE, makes for a very efficient operation that the veterans and the dependents find most satisfactory.

The members of the Departments of Veterans' Services and the district Departments of Veterans Services are dedicated, conscientious individuals, many of whom are veterans in their own right, who are working within a field they believe in, deriving satisfaction from knowing that they are doing a good job for the veterans who served our country in time of war or conflict and who deserve to be helped in a time of need, in order that they may return as quickly as possible back into the main stream of our society. For those unable to return to part or fulltime employment, due to age, physical or emotional disability, we seek to secure a degree of financial stability that will allow the individual to maintain one's self with dignity.

State Staff and Resources

The Commonwealth, through the Department of Veterans' Services, maintains offices at the Leverett Saltonstall State Office Building,

100 Cambridge St., Boston as well as Contact Offices at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, John F. Kennedy Federal Building, Boston, and in Providence, the Federal Building for the specific purposes of serving the needs of the local and district Departments of Veterans' Services as well as to administer the many programs of assistance for the veterans that are the responsibility of the Department of Veterans' Services. These state offices are staffed by highly trained specialists who are ready and available to assist the Veterans' Agents and Directors in their efforts to render prompt and effective service.

Burial Agents

In each city and town the Veterans' Agent shall be the Burial Agent who shall, under regulations established by the Commissioner, cause properly to be interred the body of a veteran or adult dependent who dies without sufficient means to defray funeral expenses; and the body of any dependent child of a veteran if such veteran and his wife, or his widow, be without sufficient means to defray funeral expenses.

Care of Veterans' Graves

Annually in April, the Mayor of every city and the Selectmen of every town shall appoint a resident of such city or town, who shall be a veteran as defined in clause Forty-three of Section 7 of Chapter 4, M.G.L. as a Veterans' Graves Officer. It shall be the duty of the Veterans' Graves Officer to cause every veteran's grave within such city and town to be suitably kept and cared for. Such care shall include the clearing of weeds and other unseemly growth from said graves; the repairing, replacement, and general up-keep of fences around said graves; the raising and repairing of sunken grave stones and markers and other similar services that may be necessary to restore and maintain such graves and their surroundings in an orderly fashion. In cities and towns where there are cemeteries containing the remains of deceased veterans, such cities and towns shall cause to be placed on such veteran's grave a flag of the United States on every Memorial Day.

Programs

Women Are Veterans, too!

Women, like men who served in the military services, can be potentially eligible for a variety of veterans' benefits. Veterans' Services assists women veterans and offers the same equal access to areas of assistance and benefits that are available to other veterans.

PTSD Center

The Commonwealth, under the Office of Department of Veterans' Services, offers a PTSD Center for the treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The program is designed to assess and treat male and female Vietnam veterans suffering from PTSD.

Homeless Identification

Assisting the homeless veteran has become a prime area of concern to Veterans' Services. The securing of low or moderate housing remains a major problem, but many homeless veterans have received assistance with housing problems as well as receiving assistance to prevent eviction, which would result in having additional veterans and their families as "homeless".

Agent Orange Program

Under the Department of Veterans' Services, a research program, one of the first in the nation, has been established to study the effects of Agent Orange in Massachusetts Vietnam Veterans. Referrals by Veterans' Agents and Directors of Veterans' Services of Vietnam veterans concerned about Agent Orange are made to those involved with this study.

Former Prisoner Of War Program

The Veterans' Agents and Directors of the Department of Veterans' Services have assisted former prisoners of war by making referrals to the Veterans Affairs for detailed physical examinations, individual counseling, diet and

fitness activities as well as group sessions. Starvation diets, inhumane treatment, and a lack of medical care impacted the physical condition of the POWs.

Alcoholic-Drug Treatment

The Veterans' Agents and Directors of the Department of Veterans' Services have full knowledge of inpatient and outpatient medical services available to those veterans who seek assistance with the problem of alcohol or drug abuse. From detoxification to a rehabilitation program, Veterans' Services assists.

Veterans Employment & Training Services

Programs and opportunities under this U.S. Department of Labor program are known by the Agents and Directors of the Department of Veterans' Services with veterans being referred to this agency for assistance. Agents and Directors also utilize the veterans representatives at the Job Centers of the Massachusetts Division of Employment Security in assisting the unemployed and the underemployed veteran.

U.S. Small Business Administration

Office of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans' Services advises of and makes referrals to the Small Business Administration, Vietnam Era, and disabled veterans, with the mission of the Small Business Administration to help the veteran get into business and to stay in business. Veterans referred to SBA are given "special consideration" in Agency programs.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Knowledge of and referrals to various rehabilitation programs of Veterans Affairs where veterans workshop programs prepare veterans for employment.

SUMMARY

TYPES OF SERVICES AND BENEFITS

State Bonus Payments

Assisting eligible veterans with obtaining state bonus.

Power Of Attorney

Appointment of Veterans' Services as Claimant's Representative for the filing of application for Veterans Affairs entitlements.

VA Compensation And Pensions Matters

Dependency Entitlements

Eligibility Information

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation or Pension

Preparing and Developing Claims for Filing Servicemen's and Veterans' Survivor Benefits

Re-opening of Claims for Increase in VA

Compensation

Eligibility Verification

Discharge Difficulties

Appeals

Certificates in lieu of Lost Discharges

General Court Martial Cases

Review of Discharges for Up-Grading

Educational And Vocational Benefits

Counsel and Assist Veterans and Eligible

Dependents in Obtaining Federal and State Benefits

Scholarships

Prepare Various Federal and State Forms

Assist With Preparing Applications for Benefits Under the "GI Bill"

Employment

Contacts with Employers and Job Agencies

Re-employment Rights Procedures

Un-employment Compensation problems and Appeals

Linkage with Mass. Division of Employment Security Job Center

Gold Star Parents

- Rights and Benefits
- Filing Claims - Federal and State

Hospitalization and Domiciliary Care

- Assist with Applications for:
 - Clinics
 - Emergency Medical Care
 - Veterans Affairs Medical Centers
 - State Hospitals and Soldiers Homes
 - Other Federal Hospitals

Housing

- Evictions
- Veterans Affairs Loan Guaranty
- F.H.A. Loans
- Federal and State Housing

Homeless

- Emergency assistance to homeless veterans in obtaining shelter and related necessities.

Industrial Accident Cases

- Assist and advise

Insurance Matters

- U.S. Government Insurance - Applications
- U.S. Indemnity Insurance - Conversions
- National Service Life Insurance:
 - Disability
 - Reinstatements
 - Waivers
- Assists With Filing for U.S. Government Death Benefits
- Health Insurance Coverage

Loan Guaranty - US Department of Veterans Affairs, Manchester Office

- Applications
- Appraisals
- Certificate of Eligibility
- Expediting
- Foreclosure Difficulties
- Restoring Entitlement

Medical Problems

- Local, State, and Federal facilities
- Emergency and Routine Exams
- Dental
- Agent Orange
- Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Counseling-Referral
- Veterans Affairs Authorizations

Notary Services

- Needed for Various Documents

Photostatic Work

- Copies of all types of Documents

Prisoners Of War/Missing In Action

- Advice and Counsel
- Assist in Obtaining POW Medals

Recording of Service Records

- According to State Law

Reference Material

- Acquiring copies of all State and Federal references pertaining to veterans' rights, benefits, and where same may be obtained.

Retirement Matters

- Employees Compensation Bureau
- Retirement - State, Local, and County System
- Laws and Procedures
- General Information and Assistance

Selection Service Information

Social Security Matters

- Social Security Assistance
- Disability Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medicare

Rehabilitation Matters

- Relating to Veterans
- Relating to Members of Family
- Veterans Affairs Program
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Alcohol and Drug Abuse
Other Federal and State programs
Private Agency programs
Industrial Programs

Tax Benefits and Difficulties

Property Tax Abatement Assistance
Appeals
Federal and State Exemptions
Adjustments

Adjutant General Office

Verification and determination of eligibility
Secure Certificates in lieu of Lost Discharges

Civil Service

Advise and Counsel Relative to Veterans rights
for federal, state, and local employment
Veterans Preference

Armed Forces

Advice and information regarding CHAMPUS.

Women Veterans

Advice and information regarding rights
and Benefits available.

Lebanon-Grenada

Advising service personnel with Lebanon or
Grenada Campaign Medal or Benefits Available.

World War II Maritime Service

Assist World War II Merchant Seamen With
Information As To Applying For Eligibility for
Veterans Affairs Benefits.

National Cemetery At Bourne, Mass.

Information as to procedure In Making
Arrangements For Burial of Veteran Including
Burial of Spouse or the Dependent Child.

Being a veteran does not make entitlements automatic. The eligibility to receive entitlements from the Department of Veterans' Services and from Veterans Affairs must be determined and shown. The local Veterans' Agents and Directors of Veterans' Services will assist veterans and their dependents in securing benefits and entitlements that they are entitled to receive. That is the responsibility of Veterans' Services.

Who Is Eligible For Benefits?

Veterans, dependents of Veterans, and survivors of Veterans of any of the following wars or campaigns may be eligible to receive benefits and/or services provided by Federal or State statutes:

Wars

Civil War - Last Union veteran died 8/2/56
Last Confederate veteran died 3/16/58
Indian Wars - Last veteran died 6/18/73
Mexican War - Last veteran died 9/3/29
Spanish-American War
World War I
World War II
Korean War
Vietnam War
Persian Gulf War

Campaigns

Army of Cuban Occupation
Nicaraguan Campaign (1912)
Haitian Campaign (1915, 1919, 1920)
Dominican Campaign
Second Nicaraguan Campaign
Yangtze Service
Army of Occupation of Germany
China Service
Navy Occupation Service
Army of Occupation
Lebanon Campaign
Grenada Campaign
Panama Campaign

Eligible Dependents:

Spouse of the veteran.
Widow/widower of the deceased veteran.
Parent of veteran.
Child of veteran through 17 years of age.
Child of a veteran between 18 years of age and 23 years of age while the child is attending high school or an institute of higher learning.
Child of veteran over 18 years of age who is mentally or physically unable to support himself or herself and was affected by the disability prior to his or her 18th birthday.
A divorced spouse of a veteran shall lose his or her eligibility upon the issuance by the court of a "decree absolute." The eligibility for benefits of the children of a veteran shall not be affected by the issuance of a "decree absolute."

**Massachusetts
Veterans' Service Agents Association, Inc.**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We the Veterans' Agents of Massachusetts gratefully acknowledge and thank:

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
REGIONAL OFFICES
BOSTON — PROVIDENCE — MANCHESTER**

**MASSACHUSETTS SOLDIER'S HOMES
CHELSEA — HOLYOKE**

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VETERANS - VETERANS' WIDOWS - DEPENDENTS

Veterans Benefits

M.G.L. Chapter 115, as amended

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO:

- ★ File a written application for veteran's benefits at any time. You can insist upon this right, even if told that you are ineligible.
108 CMR: 4.02 (1)
- ★ Get help from your veterans agent in completing your application.
- ★ Receive a full explanation of the services and benefits available under M.G.L. Chap. 115, as well as other available benefits.
108 CMR: 4.01 (2)
- ★ Receive a written notice and explanation of the approval or denial of your application for benefits.
108 CMR: 10.90 (25), 108 CMR: 8.02 (1)
- ★ Be treated with dignity and respect, and to receive accurate, courteous, and timely service.
108 CMR: 4.01 (1)
- ★ Appeal and request a hearing if you disagree with any action taken on your case.
108 CMR: 8.12 (1)
- ★ Expect confidentiality; personal information will not be collected or used except for the purpose of determining your eligibility for benefits.
108 CMR: 4.01 (1)
- ★ Receive fair and equal treatment without regard to sex, race, religion, or handicap.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON YOUR RIGHTS AND BENEFITS, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES BY CALLING YOUR CITY OR TOWN HALL.